

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000222

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2015

TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [BA](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH NEW MINISTER OF JUSTICE

REF: MANAMA 68

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

.

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) In an introductory meeting with the new Minister of Justice, Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Sitry February 8, the Ambassador discussed the counterterrorism challenges in the region and stressed the importance of aggressively prosecuting the four terrorist suspects currently on trial in Bahrain. The Minister, noting the recent terrorist activity in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, agreed that preventing terrorist acts in Bahrain is extremely important. Turning to USG-sponsored judicial reform programs, the Minister pledged his commitment to continued positive change and modernization in the Ministry. On the Iraqi elections, Al Sitry -- himself a Shi'a -- said that many Bahraini Shi'a look to Iraq more than Iran as an example because it is an Arab state. End Summary.

-----  
USG-Funded Judicial Reform Programs in Bahrain  
-----

2. (C) The Ambassador congratulated Al Sitry on his new position and briefed him on the status of USG-funded judicial reform programs in Bahrain. (Note: Before the King's cabinet reshuffle on February 1, Al Sitry was the Minister of Municipalities and Agricultural Affairs (reftel). End Note.) The American Bar Association (ABA) is currently helping to establish an alternative dispute resolution system and a continuing education program for judges and prosecutors. The ABA is also interviewing candidates for a program implementer who will work directly in the Ministry's offices. Al Sitry said that he is actively involved in the selection process. The Ambassador mentioned that the MEPI-funded Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) will host a conference in Bahrain at the end of March focusing on financial and commercial law. The Ambassador added that John Attanasio, the Dean of Law at the Southern Methodist University, was exploring the possibility of inviting Bahrainis to a second Rule of Law Forum as a follow-on to the September 2004 Forum. The Minister expressed openness to that idea and emphasized the Ministry's appreciation for the USG's support of its reform efforts. He said the Ministry would take advantage of every opportunity to implement positive change.

-----  
Combating terrorism  
-----

3. (C) The Ambassador stressed that the four terrorist suspects whose trial is currently suspended pending a constitutional challenge are of great concern. The USG was very surprised when one of the suspects and his brother -- who were imprisoned on separate charges -- were released in January after a judge modified their sentences to time served. The Ambassador said he hoped the government would be aggressive in its prosecution of the suspects. The Minister assured the Ambassador that the GOB is very concerned about the terrorist suspects and terrorism in general. He mentioned the terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and pointed out, "Who knows if they will come to Bahrain?" He noted that terrorism is not just an action, but also a mindset; the GOB must fight terrorism through educational, political, and economic reform. He said that on February 7 the Ministerial Committee for Legal Affairs discussed a draft anti-terrorism and conspiracy law and would send a report to the Cabinet soon. Al Sitry thought the law would be before Parliament in a month or two.

-----  
Iran, Iraq, and Israel/Palestine  
-----

4. (C) The Minister asked the Ambassador about the situations in Iraq, Iran, and Israel/Palestine. The Ambassador said the Iraqi elections were a very positive step. Al Sitry stated that Iraq's Sunnis should participate in the constitutional process. He added that many Bahraini Shi'a look to Iraq more than Iran as an example because it is an Arab state. He hoped that Iraq would set a positive precedent for democracy in the region, but he worried that a

continuously unstable Iraq would set a negative example. On Iran, the Minister said the average person in the region believes that the more the U.S. threatens Iran, the more hostile its response will be. He noted that even though the GOB had problems with Iran, relations are stable and friendly. The Minister supported the existence of Israel, but stressed that the U.S. must use its influence to pressure the Israelis at the negotiating table. Otherwise, both sides would end up back at square one.

MONROE